No. 48.

THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

Issued by direction and under the authority of the American Section of the Theosophical Society in Convention for free distribution to members. Members of Branches will receive copies through their officers. The Theosophical Society is not responsible for any statements contained herein. WILLIAM Q. JUDGE, General Secretary.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

All communications should be addressed to ALEXANDER FULLERTON, 144 Madison Ave, N. Y

For paragraphs under the word "Ans." the editor is personally responsible.

June, 1893.

QUESTION CCXL.

No books on Occultism exist in our day which teach the secrets of Theosophy. All are in parables. Jesus also taught in parables so that he might not be understood. Is not this, then, selfishness on the part of Theosophists?

K. E. Turnbull.—Even were the assertion just that "no books on Occultism exist in our day," the question of Theosophy remains unaffected, Occultism and Theosophy being totally distinct subjects. Whatever secrets the former may claim bear no relation to Theosophy, this being simply the revival of certain teachings of a highly philosophic and ethical character which have existed from time immemorial though buried from Western minds in the indecipherable mass of Eastern lore, only recently become in part accessible through translations and interpretations based on an intimate and close study of the originals.

Prolonged research amid the many able writings concerning the sacred philosophy of India reveals the doctrines of Karma, Reïncarnation, and the complex nature of man which are now being promulgated as Theosophy; and scattered everywhere

throughout the world are many true and ardent believers in these teachings, who are indebted in no degree to what may be called the present Theosophic propaganda for their knowledge and acceptance of the Eastern philosophy. This being so, Theosophy cannot rightly be said to consist of secrets, nor is it correct to speak of those teachings as cast in the form of parables, though doubtless they are so deeply imbedded in the great bulk of Oriental scripture that the patient and persevering labor of the devoted inquirer is requisite in delving for this hidden ore. To the student then, attracted by these subjects, the revelation has always been an open one, and many such having searched and found for themselves have straightway imparted their hardly-won knowledge to the world,—as seen in the translations of the *Upanishads*, and various commentaries thereon, which appeared in Europe some seventy or more years ago,—the broadcast diffusion and popularization of these ideas of Indian source remaining to-day the express object and reason for existence of the Theosophical Society, so it does not exactly appear wherein the charge consists of a selfish withholding of this particular gospel of good things.

It is true that Jesus taught in parables, but his teachings in that form as preserved in the New Testament narrative were of so practical a character that they served as attractive allegories, calculated to arrest the attention and charm the imagination of the multitudes, and not at all as channels for any secrets of an occult nature. As nothing is known of the instruction that the Prophet of Nazareth may have imparted privately to his followers, it cannot be asserted to have been in parables, though it is not improbable that some form of symbolism was largely used, in harmony with the usual practice in occult teaching as well as with the oriental love of mystery-making. It may be safely said, however, that if those of the chosen circle were chiefly drawn from the group of disciples, the true import of these inner teachings was not unlikely to have been utterly misconceived, judging from the strangely materialistic tone of many of their self-recorded utterances throughout the Gospels, this probably in some measure accounting for the rapid extinction of an esoteric sense in the spread of Christianity.

As to the question raised of selfishness in witholding occult teaching, for it is presumably this which the questioner has in mind, there is not a little to be said in favor of this view. Granted that the Masters of Occult Wisdom, from the very quality of their god-like nature and divine knowledge, are too far withdrawn from human ken to reach forth to every suppliant, this in no way absolves the few who have been partially instructed in a higher knowledge from sharing their precious store with all who desire an equal enlightenment. Indeed, it would appear to be a manifest duty, in strict accordance with the professed tie of universal brotherhood, on the part of those who know more than their fellows, to impart freely of the secret knowledge that is to help and elevate humanity. As a matter of fact, however, a reluctant attitude is only too often observed among the so-called pupils of occultism, who by their adoption of a lofty tone of superior privilege in their converse with the uninitiated seem as though oppressed with the knowledge they may not share. This is the more regrettable since it is always and everywhere the first and altogether justifiable reproach, put upon the Theosophist who is wholly guiltless of the charge—since it refers solely to the Esoteric Theosophist or Occultist—that if anything *is* really known by the few, it is selfish, and thereby a blank denial of fraternal principles, to hoard or secrete such knowledge among those only who will pledge themselves to a like policy of restriction. An attitude of reserve may be pardonable in a Master of Wisdom; but between the ordinary man and his brother man an assumption of access to hidden sources of knowledge is an unfortunate claim to make when it can be substantiated in no satisfactory way, the only plea advanced for such enforced silence being that one's brother would be apt to make a wrong use of occult secrets that are perfectly safe and proper in one's own keeping!

This is too crude a statement for acceptation by modern intelligence, pretentions of this order being most readily detected and keenly resented by our quick-witted generation; and that people can be found to play such a rôle, in perfect gravity and good faith, proves them of necessity to be wholly wanting

in even an elementary sense of the humorous, for if there is one solitary thing we may claim to have learned at the close of our nineteenth century, it is the infinitessimal little that any, even the wisest of us, knows, and the utter impossibility in our present development of knowing fully and clearly on any point.

It is therefore not to be wondered at that the exhibition of these unbrotherly tactics, in withholding such grains of truth as have been from time to time divulged, is not unfrequently met by a very deeply rooted conviction that the occult few really know no more than the uninitiated many, secrecy being merely a mask wherewith to confront the inconvenient inquiries of an awakened interest on those crucial points that are of a vital importance to mankind.

Ans.—It may be selfish in a man to keep only for himself that which belongs to himself, but it cannot be selfish to keep that which is not his own property and is merely entrusted to him by the real owners. In Theosophy proper there is nothing secret, nothing which may not be proclaimed to all the world: in fact, such proclamation is one of the very purposes of the Theosophical Society, and the daily aim and effort of its most zealous, devoted members. To bring home to every soul the vivifying influence of Truth, and to promote the reformation of humanity through accurate knowlege of the facts and laws of life, is the work to which the foremost of F.T.S. are unreservedly consecrated. For these truths are the common property, the common right, of mankind, and he who distributes them lavishly is but striving that all may enter into their own possessions, enjoy the sunlight and the air which shall invigorate and bless. Such truths cannot be misused: Karma, Reïncarnation, advance through conquest of the lower nature, are not facts which can be misapplied or made detrimental to the public good.

But the case is very different with the Occult forces of Nature, forces which cease to be occult (hidden) to a student pursuing a prescribed course, and become palpable and manipulable. These have been mastered by preceding students as they became Adepts, and are taught to present ones as they

approach the same goal. But they are taught and are mastered now on the same condition as hitherto, namely, the preliminary development of a character which shall make them congruous. That is to say, a man must acquire fitness to use power before he can have the power, must attain self-control before he can receive control of nature, must be purged of selfishness before he can be granted dominion. In other words, he cannot be endowed with prerogative until he has demonstrated his qualifications to employ it rightly.

A long and rigorous preparatory course is therefore exacted of all who seek ingress to the Occult realm and power. It begins with very simple requisitions,—faith in the teacher, a spirit of mingled energy and docility, the daily effort to rule the lower nature, an ability to preserve secrets inviolate. Only as the character is thus shaped can advance be possible. Tests come abundantly through the incidents of life, trifling matters gauging the real quality of the man. The early prescriptions of the career may seem insignificant, yet they have inherent purpose, and, moreover, *they are laid down by Those who have been through the career and know its necessity.* If, therefore, even at this initial stage They exact any pledges of secrecy or fidelity, this can only be because They comprehend, as we cannot, their bearing and test-value.

The Adepts, being Themselves but the trustees of the knowledge and powers of Occultism, have not only the right but the obligation to require from Their pupils the same guarantees which They gave Themselves at like epoch. Just what these shall be it is for Them, not for us, to dictate. If we wish to be entrusted with the knowledge They received at the corresponding stage, we must comply with the conditions They then complied with and now enforce. To demand that we shall receive the knowledge without the conditions, or that Their pupils shall give us the knowledge when the Adepts will not, shows that we do not trust the wisdom of the Teachers or respect the pledge of the pupils.

Furthermore. The pupils, being themselves in their small degree the trustees of such knowledge as is vouchsafed them, are no more at liberty to treat it as a personal possession than

is an Adept. They cannot take any other stand than that they did not so receive it, neither can they so impart it. And in addition they can say to an objector, "The steps to this elementary acquisition are as open to you as to us. There is no favoritism or partiality. If you wish to enter on a like course of instruction, you are just as free to do so as we. The instruction is open to every man, *provided* he will agree to the conditions to it. Not any more than we can you have the instruction apart from the conditions, but then you should not want to; for if you do not believe that the Adepts are right in the conditions, why should you suppose Them right in the instruction?"

It would seem, then, that the Theosophical truths needful for mankind are free and to be freely circulated; that the Esoteric teachings, because of their bearings on matters requiring preliminary formation of character, are only given under time-tested securities and guarantees; that their custodians are the proper judges of the securities needed; that any man can secure the teachings upon demonstrating his fitness; that he has no right to expect them otherwise; and that if he wishes to be a pupil he must be a pupil on the same terms and rules as those who have gone this way before him.

QUESTION CCXLI.

Is not the Absolute ever the Unconscious?

Ans.—The Absolute, whether considered as to its nature or its mode of being, is utterly beyond any conception by us; and this for the simple reason that our own experience is one of relation. We know things and people, not in themselves, but as they appear to us. We know ourselves, not by immediate perception of our actuality, but as we compare manifestations at different times and under different conditions. And we cannot even think of ourselves as existing apart from the causes which prompt feeling, thought, or will. As imagination is restricted to the materials it possesses, not having the power to create others but only to reärrange these, we are unable to

imagine any existence severed from all relation and continuing in and by itself.

Having therefore neither the experience nor the faculty to apprehend a state of being the converse of our own, we cannot make assertions about it. There are, indeed, certain facts which must be predicated of Deity, since without them the origin and conduct of the physical and moral universe would be impossible,—wisdom, power, etc., and these, however metaphysically incompatible with the term "Absolute", are necessitated by the Ultimate Being's identification with the Ultimate Cause. The finite intellect is powerless to reconcile the two, yet reason asserts the inevitable coëxistence of both. But when we go further and attempt exposition of details in the penetralia of Deity, we fall into hopeless perplexity or into wild assertion thinly veiled by terminology.

"Unconscious" means without consciousness, a state analogous to a faint; mind, energy, feeling, will being in abeyance. To assert that this is the condition of the ultimate source of all vitality, that the Supreme Being is in perpetual coma, is to utter nonsense. It is not avoided either by metaphysical juggling with the word "consciousness", or by using a phrase and saying that "God is Consciousness". For the former employs an analysis necessitated by our own limitations, one which may have no validity in regions beyond them: and the latter is absolutely meaningless. We can attach meaning to the expression "Jones is good", but none whatever to "Jones is goodness", unless it is understood as signifying personified or embodied goodness. Jones may illustrate, exhibit, possess goodness, but he cannot *be* goodness. Similarly we may say "God is great", and the phrase has intelligible meaning, but not "God is greatness", for that has none.

When flimsy philosophers talk of Deity as unconscious, they probably have in mind the thought that the Divine consciousness is very different from our consciousness and not expressible by the same terms. This of course is so, and the fact must be instantly perceived by every thinker. But the possession of a different kind of consciousness is altogether another matter from having no consciousness at all—which is signified

by the word "unconscious". One might as well say that the contrast of Siberian with Australian vegetation proves that Siberia has no vegetation whatever. If, then, speculative writers desire to write with intelligibility and accuracy, let them first make sure of their own thought, and then of the words which precisely convey it. If no words exist which do so, they may be coined, for the sources of the English language are sufficiently copious to provide new compounds or variations. Better even use a circumlocution than a paradox or an absurdity. And this is no less true, no matter how eminent the writers who have thus erred before. The parrot-like repetition of expressions from a famous author is in no way a defense for such evil, since nonsense is not changed into sense by saying "Oh, but So-and-so said it!" We shall never have any worthy mental processes until they are our own, until we think freely and all-roundedly upon every proposition coming before us, examining carefully into its own nature and bearings, not at all fettered by the fact that a great name has committed itself to one view. Mental slavery is discountenanced by all real teachers, and H. P. B. warned against it emphatically. Verbal slavery is one form of it. Phrases, no matter where they come from, are not wholesome if inexact or misleading, and we are not in the least bound to use them because greater people have done so. If, then, any one says that the Absolute must be unconscious, let us ask him what he means by unconscious, how he knows that the Absolute must be so, and why he should puzzle himself with problems which will ever remain insoluble and which have no possible bearing on truth or duty.

QUESTION CCXLII.

In answer to Question 186 of "Forum" it is said that "Theosophy does not teach submission to injustice, tyranny, or encroachment upon inherent right, physical or mental". How is this reconciled with the teaching of Jesus, "If thine enemy smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other"?

Ans.—This implies that Theosophy in general, and the FORUM in particular, are under some obligation to square their

positions with those of Jesus, and must vindicate themselves when they do not. But this is not the fact. The matter does, indeed, resolve itself into such obligation upon the FORUM, inasmuch as its heading very distinctly states that the T. S. (and, of course, Theosophy) is not responsible for its utterances, nobody being but the utterers. Now the FORUM has never held—and never will, while under present management—that truth is to be tied up by the *dicta* of any sages, however revered, or that liberty of opinion and freedom of search are curtailed by the *ipse dixit* of any authority, East or West. The most unfettered independence as to investigation, conclusions, and the expression of them is not only the right of every thinker, it is also the only road to the establishment of truth. Hence the fact that other thinkers have reached different convictions, or even that some honored Teacher expresses himself on other lines, carries no dismay to the sincere, nor would they be staggered, much less upset, if opposition was general. It would not necessarily be a case of *Athanasius contra mundum*, but the moral would be just as good. Read the Answer to Question 109 in FORUM 22.

If, then, a conviction expressed in the FORUM was found to be antagonized by a sentence uttered by Jesus, the Editor would be in no wise disconcerted. His reverence is for the character, the spirit of Jesus, not for all of his mere words. And anyhow, no matter who may pronounce an opinion, the ultimate test of its excellence is its conformity to reason and the moral sense. A name does not verify a doctrine; only demonstration can do that.

The truth of theories about right living is to be tested by the possibility of their universal application. What would be the consequence of general acceptance by godly men (and of course no others would be open to the influence of Jesus) of the precept to offer the other cheek to a person who had smitten one. Simply this,—unlimited freedom to violence and rapine. Society is even now with difficulty preserved from the selfish maraudings of conscienceless men. What would ensue if all protection was avowedly renounced, and if the violent were notified that not only would every attempt at violence be fully

submitted to, but that they would be invited to repeat it? Can any one for a moment suppose that the idea of true religion is a world where scoundrels are put on principle in the ascendant, the good deliberately encouraging them to fresh outrages, and the only restraint being upon order and peace; a world, in short, where virtue was fettered and crime ostentatiously fostered? Imagine a condition of things where moral standards were reversed, the right frowned upon and the wrong favored!

Society is certainly very far from an ideal state at present. Very sore abuses still exist, and laws and ethics and methods need much reformation. Still, not a little has been accomplished, and the security for individual liberty and right is incomparably greater than at any era historically known. Violence has been largely repressed, and the peaceable enjoy a tranquility which was undreamed of only a century ago. Now all this progress has been gained through the growth of the spirit of freedom and the sense of justice towards individuals. It is reasonable to suppose that further progress is to be achieved on the same lines. The domineering and the bad will be held still better in check, and the quiet and good be increasingly enabled to live in peace and safety. And it is equally reasonable to suppose that a reversal of the process would revive exactly the old evils from which we are emerging. Give religious sanction to tyranny and violence and disregard for rights, and you remand us back to the Dark Ages, to the rule of consecrated ruffians in Church and State. That result would not be in the least frustrated, nor in the least more palatable, because in pursuance of a text. If my honestly-gained and honestly-used possessions are wrested from me by a bully, I am not "reconciled" to that robbery by a quotation even from the Bible; and if a highwayman forced me to give up my watch, it would be monstrous if I had to conform to his Scriptural injunction that I was to invite him home that he might confiscate also my wardrobe! Don't let us consecrate absurdities under the pretext of reverence, or bring religion and religious Teachers into disrepute by covering nonsense with their names. The bad are blatant enough as things are: we need not encourage them by vacating our own reason and handing over to them the choicest

names in spiritual history as stimulants to their badness. And if we are puzzled how to account for strange utterances from undoubted Sages, we still have enough of their recorded wisdom to occupy all our meditation, and can very well drop the sand when we have the pure gold from which it may be separated.

QUESTION CCXLIII.

I don't altogether like the Forum. It seems so positive and matter-of-fact, not gentle. Couldn't it allow more to weakness, and not expect the rest of us to toe the line so strictly? I, for one, dont want to be nothing but reasonable.

Ans.—The FORUM does not pretend to address itself to babes and sucklings, nor is its experience that "out of the mouths" of such "is ordained strength". Some time ago a feeble Sister wrote to ask that her FORUM be discontinued, as she found it "inharmonious". No doubt she did, and at her stage she was better without it. There are eras when the stomach rejects anything stronger than gruel. But is it quite fair that gruel should be made the universal diet? Are we all to put up with that fare because a few decrepit folk find it palatable and nutritious?

Facts have to be treated as facts, unless one prefers to live in an unreal, fanciful world. We do not get rid of facts and their consequences by denying them, or by putting them to one side, or by investing them with a pretty drapery of fiction. Any one of these courses is possible to, as it is usually practised by, "weakness", but it only makes the weakness more pronounced. There is neither "gentleness" nor wisdom in saying "Oh yes, go ahead. It doesn't make any real difference what you believe or how you act. Whether you toe the line strictly or not at all is quite the same thing." If this would be absurd as applied to questions of health or business, why any less so as to questions of sound thought and right evolution, which are just as much the subjects of Law and just as little the sport of caprice or ignorance? Karma is the most inflexible of all laws, and everybody is safer when he heeds it,

both editors and readers seeing more if they open their eyes than if they close them.

If by "nothing but reasonable" you mean "valuing only syllogisms", you are right in not wanting to be so. The sphere of argument is not coëxtensive with the round of human functioning. But sound "reason" never so holds. Recognizing all facts, it insists that sentiment and taste and sense of proportion, etc. have the same validity as other facts, and have their due place in a symmetrical character. There must be all of these elements in a good make-up. But then they must be "reasonable" in their quantity. Judicious people do not wish to be flighty or *dilettanti* or extreme. If, then, the proper admixture of other qualities than reason is to be determined by reason, reason must be the supervisory, and therefore dominant, faculty.

Perhaps you might like the FORUM better if you gave up your fancy for "weakness" as unwholesome, and deliberately tried to relish sound, robust facts. It is well in all topics, but especially in Theosophy, to get rid of preconceptions and to welcome in their place such ideas as are demonstrated true. This is exactly what the FORUM urges you to do. Don't frown at a proposition because it sounds "positive", but enquire simply whether it is correct. If really "matter-of-*fact*" it is just what you need, for what all of us human beings need is not illusion but fact. Stir up your reason more and your predilections less. Don't expect printed documents to contain only what you have hitherto thought, and never suspect an idea merely because it is unfamiliar. If you thus reverse your present methods you will certainly be broader and more capacious, and you may *possibly*, unlike our feeble Sister in the West, fail to find the FORUM "inharmonious".

Copies of FORUM *Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 16 cannot be supplied. A copy of any other number can be had by sending 5 cents in stamps to the Editor.*

THE SUPPORT OF THE T.S.

In the April number of *The Path* appeared a communication from me under the above heading in which was the crude outline of a plan for establishing a permanent and reliable fund for carrying on the support of our Society. In the June issue appeared a report of the operation of the plan up to the date of going to press, and a statement of the development of the plan up to that time.

There have been so many and such cordial responses to these communications that I am convinced lack of knowledge of the plan alone prevents its general adoption; and this method of laying the matter before all members has been hit upon as probably the most speedy and efficacious.

I am very well aware that the ability to contribute varies with each individual; therefore I have concluded, in order to accommodate all, to provide for the following classes, every member of which shall pledge himself to contribute the amounts named in addition to dues and all sums now being contributed:—

100	persons	who	would	pledge	10	cents per month;
100	"	"	"	25	"	"
100	"	"	"	50	"	"
75	"	"	"	$1.00	"	"
50	"	"	"	2.00	"	"
50	"	"	"	3.00	"	"
40	"	"	"	4.00	"	"
30	"	"	"	6.00	"	"
20	"	"	"	8.00	"	"
10	"	"	"	10.00	"	"

I am certain that the mere announcement made herein will be sufficient to satisfy all that funds are needed and will be applied to good ends. If not, please read the Annual Report of the General Secretary made before Convention.

Please address all communications on this subject to

Fraternally,

G. E. HARTER,
247 Green St.,
Dayton, Ohio.

The above is approved by the General Secretary.